

PROPOSED MONUMENT  
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The proposed Monument RMP is the land use plan that BLM proposes to approve for guiding resource management in the Monument Planning Area for the next 15 to 20 years. The proposed Monument RMP is a modification of Alternative C, the Preferred Alternative, in the draft Monument RMP/EIS.

Plan Approval

The Monument RMP will be approved by the State Director no sooner than 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes a notice of filing of the final EIS in the **Federal Register** and pending final action on any protest that may be filed. Approval will be withheld on any portion of the RMP being protested until final resolution has been completed on such protest. Before the RMP is approved, public notice will be given if there is a significant change made to the proposed Monument RMP and the public will have the opportunity to comment on the change. Approval of the RMP will be documented in a record of decision meeting the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

Protest Provision

The procedures for raising a protest about the proposed Monument RMP are contained in 43 CFR 1610.5-2, which is reprinted in its entirety below.

**1610.5-2 Protest procedures.**

(a) Any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of a resource management plan may protest such approval or amendment. A protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process.

(1) The protest shall be in writing and shall be filed with the Director. The protest shall be filed within 30 days of the date the Environmental Protection Agency published the notice of receipt of the final environmental impact statement containing

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the plan or amendment in the **Federal Register**. For an amendment not requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement, the protest shall be filed within 30 days of the publication of the notice of its effective date.

(2) The protest shall contain:

(i) The name, mailing address, telephone number and interest of the person filing the protest;

(ii) A statement of the issue or issues being protested;

(iii) A statement of the part or parts of the plan or amendment being protested;

(iv) A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record; and

(v) A concise statement explaining why the State Director's decision is believed to be wrong.

(3) The Director shall promptly render a decision on the protest. The decision shall be in writing and shall set forth the reasons for the decision. The decision shall be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested.

(b) The decision of the Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

Protests should be filed with the Director (202), Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Note that recommendations on wilderness study areas (WSAs) may not be protested since BLM and the Secretary of the Interior are merely making recommendations to the President. Protests on these recommendations will be returned to the protesting party.

**Final Wilderness EIS**

Only Congress can add an area to the National Wilderness Preservation System. BLM and the Secretary of the Interior make suitability recommendations to the President, who in turn makes recommendations to Congress.

A separate final wilderness EIS and a wilderness study report for each WSA will be prepared for the suitability recommendations made in the Monument RMP. It will contain a detailed analysis and rationale for the suitability recommendations. All individuals and organizations on the Monument RMP mail list will receive a copy of the final wilderness EIS.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The Monument Planning Area encompasses 2,059,441 acres north of the Snake River in southcentral Idaho. It includes all of Jerome and Minidoka counties and portions of Gooding, Lincoln, Blaine, Butte, and Power counties. The area is generally bounded by Bliss on the west, American Falls on the east, the Snake River on the south, and Craters of the Moon National Monument on the north. Of the 2,059,441 acres, 57 percent (1,178,989 acres) is public land administered by BLM, 2 percent (39,576 acres) is public land administered by other Federal agencies, 3 percent (65,932 acres) is land belonging to the State of Idaho, and 38 percent (774,944 acres) is privately owned land.

The planning area is divided between two resource areas. The Bennett Hills Resource Area contains 179,926 acres of public land administered by BLM west of the Gooding-Milner Canal and the Monument Resource Area has 999,063 acres.

The map at the beginning of the final EIS shows the general location of the area. Map 1, in the back of the document, shows the land status.

## ISSUES

The issues addressed by the Monument RMP pertain to the 12 resource management topics listed below.

- Lands - Retention or Disposal
- Wilderness
- Livestock Grazing
- Range Improvements
- Fire Management
- Soil Erosion
- Wildlife Habitat Management
- Minerals
- Lands for Local and State Governments and Other Needs
- Off-Road Vehicles
- Recreation
- Cultural and Historic Resources

The issues were identified through public participation. A more complete discussion of issues is contained in Chapter 1 of the final EIS.

## PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria were prepared to guide development of the RMP. They indicate the factors and data that must be considered in making decisions. Ten general criteria were considered:

1. Social and Economic Values;
2. Plans, programs, and policies of other Federal agencies, State and local government, and Indian tribes;
3. Existing laws, regulations, and BLM policy;
4. Future needs and demands for existing or potential resource commodities and values;
5. Public input;
6. Public welfare and safety;
7. Past and present use of public and adjacent lands;
8. Public benefits of providing goods and services in relation to costs;
9. Quantity and quality of noncommodity resource values; and
10. Environmental impacts.

More detailed planning criteria can be obtained from the Idaho RMP Guidebook and the Monument Planning Area Planning Criteria. Both documents are available for review at the Shoshone District Office.

## CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

BLM's Resource Management Plans must agree with and support officially approved and adopted resource-related plans (or in their absence, policies or programs) of other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and Indian tribes, so long as BLM's plans also agree with and support Federal law and regulations applicable to public lands. A special effort has been made to ensure that the proposed RMP is consistent with approved plans.

Agencies, governments, and Indian tribes were given the opportunity to identify inconsistencies with their plans during the 90-day public review

period for the draft RMP/EIS. Under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding between BLM and the Governor of the State of Idaho, BLM asked State of Idaho agencies and local government entities to identify inconsistencies. The agencies and government entities were asked to identify with which plan, policy, or program, if any, the alternatives in the draft RMP/EIS were inconsistent, and how they were inconsistent. No inconsistencies with the preferred alternative, the basis for the proposed RMP, were identified by the agencies, government, or Indian tribes.

The Governor of the State of Idaho will be given 60 days from the date of distribution of the proposed Monument RMP to identify inconsistencies and make written recommendations to the State Director. If the Governor identifies any inconsistencies and the State Director does not accept the Governor's recommendations, the State Director will notify the Governor and the Governor will have 30 days to submit a written appeal to the Director of BLM. The Director will then determine a reasonable balance between national and State interests.

The agencies, governments, and Indian tribes to whom a copy of the draft Monument RMP/EIS were sent are listed in Chapter 5 of the final EIS.

#### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The results of implementing the selected RMP will be examined periodically to inform the resource managers and public of the progress of the plan. The results being achieved under the plan will be compared with the plan objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation help the resource managers

- to determine whether an action is accomplishing the intended purpose,
- to determine whether mitigating measures are satisfactory,
- to determine if the decisions in the plan are being implemented,
- to determine if the related plans of other agencies, governments, or Indian tribes have changed, resulting in an inconsistency with the RMP,
- to identify any unanticipated or unpredictable effects, and
- to identify new data of significance to the plan.

The proposed monitoring and evaluation plan for the Monument RMP is shown in Appendix A of the final EIS. The plan specifies resource components to be monitored, how they will be monitored, where they will be monitored, the estimated cost of monitoring, and a suggested threshold level that will warrant a management concern. If future monitoring shows a variation from RMP objectives

warranting management concern, the reasons for the variation will be examined closely. Modification of a RMP decision may be needed, or the variation may be due to factors beyond BLM's control, such as climatic or economic fluctuations.

#### GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR MULTIPLE USE AND TRANSFER AREAS

Resource management plans in Idaho establish multiple use and transfer areas in the planning area. Multiple use and transfer areas are used to:

1. Clearly distinguish retention and transfer decisions;
2. Provide a geographic basis for presenting land use decisions;
3. Help ensure consistency and uniformity in Idaho RMPs; and
4. Indicate the level of resource protection, management, use, and development provided for on the public lands.

All public land in the Monument Planning Area was categorized into one of the following multiple use or transfer areas. These categories reflect the general intent of the management decisions made for the included areas. More site-specific categories were established within those discussed below. These site-specific categories are discussed later in this proposed RMP under "Management Prescriptions."

#### Limited Use Areas

Limited use areas are designated where legal and policy constraints necessitate stringent environmental control. These areas will be managed for protection of sensitive and significant wildlife habitat, scenic values, cultural resources, watershed and other resources, or areas preliminarily recommended as suitable for wilderness.

Because these areas involve relatively greater environmental constraints than other areas of public lands, special attention will be given to finding appropriate locations for potentially conflicting uses. Generally, lower intensities of use are required under carefully controlled conditions to protect and preserve the values found in these areas. Public lands in a limited use area will be retained in Federal ownership.

Moderate Use Areas

Moderate use areas are generally suitable for a wide range of existing and potential uses and will be managed for production and use of their forage, timber, minerals and energy, recreation, or other values. Where conflicts occur with resources or uses, full consideration of all benefits and costs will be taken into account in resolving such conflicts. Sensitive and significant values will always be protected consistent with Federal and State law. Public lands in a moderate use area will be retained in Federal ownership.

Intensive Use/Development Areas

These areas will generally be managed for a major or large-scale intensive use/development such as a major campground, ORV area, mine, or public utility installation. No intensive use/development areas would be established in the Monument RMP.

Transfer Areas

Transfer areas are the only areas which may be transferred out of Federal ownership under this plan. Public lands declared eligible for transfer by their inclusion in this category are subject to detailed consideration prior to the final decision regarding transfer. Transfer areas are delineated in response to specific demands and needs identified during the planning process, such as agricultural development, community expansion, and other transfers, including transfer to the State of Idaho. Transfer areas will be managed on a custodial basis until transferred from Federal jurisdiction. New public investments in these lands will generally be kept to a minimum.

## GOALS

Goals are general states or conditions that resource management is designed to achieve. They are generally not quantifiable. Goals are the basis for developing objectives.

For the proposed Monument RMP, a variety of resource uses would be allowed. Production and use of commodity resources and commercial use authorization would occur, while protecting fragile resources and wildlife habitat, preserving natural systems and cultural values, and allowing for nonconsumptive resource uses. A balanced approach to multiple use would be pursued.

## OBJECTIVES

Objectives are resource specific conditions to be achieved. They are well defined to guide future management and preparation of activity plans. Where possible, they are quantified.

Objectives for the proposed Monument RMP are included in the following discussion of Management Prescriptions.

## MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

The following management prescriptions would guide resource management activities under the proposed Monument RMP. The Statewide Resource Management Guidelines and the District Standard Operating Procedures, presented later in this proposed RMP, would also apply.

The discussion of the management prescriptions is divided into three sections. First is a discussion of management prescriptions for multiple use and transfer areas. Included is a letter designation (M for moderate use, L for limited use, T for transfer) and key number, the name of the area, the acreage, objectives for the area, and required actions to accomplish the objectives.

Next is a discussion of other resource uses that occur in more than one multiple use area.

Last is a summary of activity plans required for implementation of the proposed RMP. Activity plans are site-specific, detailed plans to be developed after approval of the RMP.

### Multiple Use and Transfer Areas

Map 4 of the final EIS shows the multiple use and transfer areas for the proposed Monument RMP.



**M1-Moderate Use - 826,577 acres**

No special limitations or restrictions on the type or intensity of resource use would be applied in this area. Valid uses would be allowed subject to environmental review and stipulations or special conditions to protect resources. This area would be open to ORV use.

**L1-WSA Recommended Suitable - 87,902 acres.**

These areas would be recommended suitable for designation by Congress as a part of the Wilderness Preservation System. This includes the Raven's Eye and Sand Butte WSAs.

These areas would be recommended suitable because they are considered to have high quality wilderness characteristics. Moderate conflicts with other resource uses may be present; other resource uses may be somewhat constrained by designation of these two WSAs.

If designated wilderness by Congress, the areas would be closed to ORV use. New mining claims would be prohibited. Mineral leasing would not be prohibited by wilderness designation, but wilderness character would be considered in making mineral leasing decisions. Land uses would be restricted to those compatible with BLM's Wilderness Management Policy. Utility developments would be effectively prohibited. A wilderness management plan would be prepared for each WSA designated. The wilderness management plans would include fire suppression guidelines designed to protect or enhance wilderness character.

If not designated wilderness by Congress, the areas would generally be managed as M1 areas as described above. The exception is 3,258 acres of areas of geologic interest within the Raven's Eye and Sand Butte WSAs which would be managed as L12 areas as described below. Sand Butte (the volcanic cone, not the entire WSA) would be closed to ORV use to protect its naturalness (approximately 220 acres). No other special designations or developments would be proposed. The other restrictions on ORVs, minerals, land uses, and fire described above would not apply.

**L2-Great Rift WSA Recommended Suitable - 179,990 acres**

This WSA was recommended suitable for wilderness designation in a previous study. Objectives for management of the area are contained in the Great Rift Proposed Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement. The 179,990-acre figure represents that portion of the Great Rift WSA lying within the Monument Planning Area on BLM-administered public lands. Another 142,460 acres of public land lies within the Idaho Falls BLM District.

*Management Prescriptions*  
*Multiple Use and Transfer Areas*

**L3-Sand Butte ORV Closure - 1,751 acres**

This area would be closed to ORV use. Otherwise, management would be the same as described for M1 areas. The ORV closure would make a more easily managed, more definite boundary along a road for exclusion of ORVs from the Sand Butte WSA. Without the L3 area, the WSA boundary would be difficult to recognize and manage as the ORV closure boundary for the Sand Butte WSA, as it doesn't follow a road or easily recognizable feature. If the Sand Butte WSA is not designated wilderness by Congress, this area would no longer be closed to ORV use.

**L4-ACEC-Substation Tract Relict Vegetation Area - 440 acres**

This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values. The area contains a natural vegetation community representative of a range site that occurred commonly in the planning area prior to human caused disturbances. It is the only known remaining relict of this condition and size in the Shoshone District, and is therefore highly valuable for research and reference. Carey Act applications have been filed on all 440 acres.

Management to protect the relict vegetation community would entail retention in Federal ownership and aggressive fire control efforts. Other opportunities to reduce the risk of loss to fire would be pursued, including cooperative agreements with adjacent landowners. ORV use would be limited to designated roads and trails to protect the vegetation while allowing movement of local farm traffic. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed. Livestock grazing would be prohibited to protect the vegetation.

An activity plan would be prepared to guide management and protection of the relict vegetation community, especially protection from fire.

The area would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and would be under full fire suppression.

**L6-ACEC-Vineyard Creek Natural Area - 105 acres**

This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values.

Vineyard Creek is the only known spawning habitat for a unique cutthroat/rainbow hybrid trout. The habitat is threatened by sedimentation from irrigation return flow from private land. Management to protect this habitat

would entail coordinating with private landowners to reduce or eliminate sedimentation caused by the irrigation return flow entering Vineyard Creek. The objective would be to lower the sediment load of the return flow below 100 ppm or to stop the return flow from entering the stream.

Vineyard Creek contains habitat that may be suitable for the Bliss Rapids snail, a candidate endangered species. The habitat in Vineyard Creek is similar to that of Box Canyon which supports a population of the snail. Future resource uses and proposals would be closely examined to ensure that snail habitat would not be adversely affected or that adverse effects could be mitigated.

This area lies within the proposed Dry Cataracts National Natural Landmark. Geologic formations associated with the Bonneville Flood, including alluvial gravel deposits, would be protected from human disturbances that would degrade their naturalness. Mineral material sales and free use would be prohibited.

The Vineyard Creek area is a very scenic and unique area. Future resource uses and proposals would be closely examined to prevent degradation of scenic quality and naturalness. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed.

An activity plan would be prepared to guide management of the unique resources of the area. This plan would specify measures to reduce sedimentation of Vineyard Creek.

The area would be closed to ORV use to protect scenic quality and promote visitor safety. The area is near an area heavily used by ORVs.

The area would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and would be under full fire suppression.

#### **L7-ACEC-Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs Sensitive Area - 128 acres**

This area would be designated an ACEC to focus management attention on special values.

Box Canyon and Blueheart Springs contain the largest populations of Shoshone sculpin, a candidate threatened species, known to exist on public land. Various proposals that might degrade the sculpin habitat have been made in the past. Future proposals would be scrutinized to ensure the habitat would not be adversely affected or that adverse effects could be mitigated. Otherwise, the proposal would be rejected.

Box Canyon contains habitat for the Bliss Rapids snail, a candidate endangered species. Although the known populations of the snail occur on private land, the species could occur on public land in the canyon. Future resource uses and proposals would be closely examined to ensure that snail habitat would not be adversely affected or that adverse effects could be mitigated.